

# Perceptions

A Quarterly Audio Magazine

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**INNOVATION STRATEGY & ROADMAP**

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INFO 287 - The HyperLinked Library

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# ACTION BRIEF

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**Convince** the Braille Institute Library and the visually impaired, blind, and reading disabled communities in Southern California **that by** producing and contributing to a quarterly audio magazine **they will** be creating and participating in an exciting new platform **which will** strengthen community bonds and expand our understanding of what it means to live with a visual impairment or reading disability **because** they will have a dedicated platform to share the diversity of their stories, voices, and perspectives.

# THE MISSION

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The Braille Institute Library has been serving the visually impaired and print disabled community in Southern California for over 100 years. Beyond the work of expanding accessibility, the mission has been, since its founding, to build and support a sense of community.



<https://www.brailleinstitute.org/library/>

## THE IDEA

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A quarterly audio magazine produced and distributed by the Braille Institute Library and the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS).

## THE QUARTERLY

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A magazine for the community by the community. Think *The New Yorker*, with opinion pieces and profiles, long read news stories, history pieces, brief pieces covering the goings-on about town, short stories, book, film, art, and music reviews. Only more diverse, more direct. Less bound to an editorially perspective. And freed from the printed page, there will be original music, sound art pieces, and day-in the-life field recordings. If it can be recorded, we will include it.

# THE TITLE

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## *Perceptions*

The title is meant to evoke the act of seeing and being seen. The ways we perceive ourselves and the world around us. The ways we believe, hope, or even fear we are perceived by others. And this publication is meant to change and complicate these perceptions by exposing different angles, new and unexpected ideas. Expanding our understanding of what it means “to see” and “be seen”.

# THE PLAN

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*Perceptions* will be released quarterly. Each issue will be limited to one to two hours. It will be made available to download in an .mp3 format on the Braille Institute Library's website, alongside the .pdf of the already existing library quarterly, *The Librarian*. Through our affiliation with NLS, *Perceptions* will also be made available via mail order, through the books-on-demand system, and the Braille and Audio Download (BARD) app for iOS and Android devices and Alexa smart speakers.

Production will occur mainly in-house, in the library's pre-existing audio recording studio and booths. The library will also purchase handheld field recording equipment to use off-site and in Braille Institute classrooms.

# THE PERSONNEL

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## **The Library**

Library personnel will take the lead on commissioning and editing submissions. The staff will elect a head editor, who oversees the entire production process. Sound editing engineers will format the files and tidy up submitted material to maintain consistent audio quality and ensure the material is being released in the best possible quality.

# THE PERSONNEL

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## **Educational Programs**

Library staff will work closely with instructors in the Braille Institute's Educational Programs to request and source submissions. Effort should be made to reach students beyond the obvious courses in art, music, and writing. Cooking, mobility, and other daily living skill classes should be considered as high priority.



# THE CONTRIBUTORS

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## Staff

Priority will be given to students, patrons, and members of the visually and reading impaired community but staff from all departments within the Braille Institute of America are welcome to submit work.

The library will record the front matter for each issue, outlining the contents and supplying any necessary notes. As a library production, each issue will also include at least one statement or piece from the library.

# THE CONTRIBUTORS

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## Patrons & Students

Once the administrative and production details are in place, there will be an open call for contributions from all patrons and students. Library and educational programming staff will assist contributors in recording and realizing the full potential of their ideas. Readers will be made available for students and patrons who do not feel comfortable reading their own work.

Once accepted, the library will take care to ensure the final product aligns with contributors' intentions before the issue is released.

# THE GUIDELINES

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The library will convene a committee to outline a set of guidelines. The committee will include library staff, educational programming staff, select patrons and students, and personnel from Marketing & Communications.

A Views & Opinion Disclaimer will precede each issue:

*The opinions and views expressed in the following issue are solely those of the contributing authors and artists and do not reflect the opinions, feelings, or perspective of the Braille Institute of America*

# THE GUIDELINES

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The Braille Institute Library believes strongly in the freedom of expression, but due to the open nature of the publication and its availability to all-ages the Library retains the right to reject material or request changes based on the use of strong language. If the language is integral to the perspective of the piece, the Library will add an advisory message in the issue's front matter and prior to the piece. Pieces that include inflammatory and derogatory language and opinions will be rejected.

Sound quality must adhere to a baseline standard. Library staff will assist the authors, artists, and readers to edit and equalize sound quality.

The content of contributions will only be altered with the explicit consent of the contributors.

## THE TRAINING

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The Braille Institute Library currently has two audio engineers on staff who record audio books and announcements. One additional staff member will be trained to provide assistance with this work, to lessen burden of the increased workload. To further assist the audio engineers, select and interested staff will also be trained on best practices for audio file management and basic audio editing.

Select and interested staff will be trained on how to use handheld field recording equipment. Training sessions will also be held for interested patrons and students.

For patrons and interested staff, the Library will also hold monthly workshops on storytelling and conducting interviews.

## THE ROLL-OUT

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The project will require the approval of the library director and the director of the Braille Institute. Once approved, a committee will be convened by the Library to delegate responsibilities, establish guidelines, and set a release schedule. When this is done, the Library will work with Educational Programs and the Marketing & Communication department to promote the publication and release the first open call for submissions.

On-going promotion will be done via the Library and Institute's pre-existing advertising channels. These include email announcements, audio announcements available through the Telephone Reader Program, and outreach efforts. Library staff and Educational Program instructors will also promote the release of new issues and request submissions during standard day-to-day interactions with patrons and students.

# EVALUATION

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During the first year, as the production process is refined, each issue is expected to improve upon the last. We will not allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Progress and experimentation is what matters most.

Because of this the hard data for each issue — the circulation numbers and number of submissions — will be less useful than tracking these numbers and how the production process changes over time. Along with the numbers, success will be gauged by the library's ability to meet the production deadlines and the community and staff's sense of overall satisfaction, which will be measured using surveys, requests for comments, and post-release debriefing sessions.

# THE TIMELINE

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This will be a flexible re-occurring program. Changes in the production process can be made between issues. For this reason, once the project has been approved by the directors an extended initial planning phase will not be necessary. The timeline below is for Issue #1. Production time for subsequent issues will be reduced to fit within a 3-month timeline, to adhere to a quarterly release schedule: Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer.

<b>Guideline Committee</b> <i>2 weeks</i> Convene committee members, one session for a preliminary draft, one session for a final draft, submit for final approval from directors	<b>Call for Contributions</b> <i>2 months</i> Library staff and Institute instructors will begin initial campaigning soliciting contributions	<b>Assemble Issue #1</b> <i>2 months</i> Library staff will process incoming contributions and prepare issue for release	<b>Release Campaign</b> <i>1 month</i> Advertise release through all available pre-existing advertising channels, including direct promotion during interactions between patrons and staff	<b>Review &amp; Plan for Issue #2</b> <i>1 month</i> Review the production and release process for issue #1, begin compiling issue #2, make adjustments to the production and release process as needed
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## THE INSPIRATION

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This project was inspired by the Memphis Public Library system's television and radio stations. I love the idea of creating a service in the library that provides the community with a space to produce and distribute original programming. A television station and a radio station require a lot of time and resources, so this project is scaled down to something I feel the Braille Institute Library is already more or less equipped for.



<https://www.memphislibrary.org/wypl/>

# THE INSPIRATION

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This project was also inspired by the success of the Braille Institute Library's Summer 2024 zine workshops.

*Perceptions* can be considered an offshoot and extension of these workshops.

The quarterly will not only inspire community members to produce their own work, it will also provide a dedicated system for distribution.

## Storytelling Through Zines and Audio Zines

Zines and Audio Zines are great mediums for storytelling, especially when it comes to short stories and commentary. A "zine" is commonly considered to be a small, handmade publication produced in limited batches and either distributed free of charge or sold through independent bookstores or by private means. They can also be traded. Usually, illustrations are included in addition to text and these custom publications frequently feature various enhancements such as textiles or glitter. What is an Audio Zine? It is a recorded audio "magazine" that - like a conventional zine - is usually centered on a specialty subject or theme. An Audio Zine recording can consist of a single narration track or multiple tracks that can include narration, music, and sound effects.

In their early years, Audio Zines were distributed on cassette tape and other physical media. In the digital age they can reach a wider audience via streaming services such as Soundcloud and YouTube. Narratives in your creative writing can range from observations on society and politics to your own personal life experiences and challenges. They can be extremely brief and simple or relatively involved. Creating and distributing unique works such as these are great as emotional outlets that often deliver therapeutic benefits for an artist/creator.

According to some sources, conventional Zines originated in the 1920s when Black creatives in Harlem wanted to publish their materials without interference from the establishment of the time. The trend became increasingly popular in the 1930s and 40s when science fiction fans would self-publish magazines related to the subject they loved. The punk subculture made efficient self-publishing prevalent in the 1980s with technologies that offered better copy machines, the personal computer, the introduction of publishing software and improved home printing technology such as inkjet and laser printing.

Check out the audio zines created by four students at our Anaheim Center via the Telephone Reader Program (TRP).

[The Librarian: Spring 2024 \[Newsletter\]](#)

## THE INSPIRATION

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The ideological foundation for this project can be found in Michael E. Casey and Laura C. Savastinuk's Library 2.0: A Guide to Participatory Services (2007). As a participatory service, *Perceptions* is designed to promote consistent close collaboration between the community and the library. The increase in the level and style of communication the production process will demand, between library staff, educational programming staff, and community members, will also likely create stronger community bonds that will extend well beyond the specifics of this publication.

And in line with Casey and Savastinuk's thoughts on the value of constant change, *Perceptions* will provide the library and community with a space to experiment and play. Each issue will be an opportunity to explore new ways of engaging with the community.